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ABSTRACT

Described is the development of the Paraprofessional Educator Manager (PEM) Model and the role of the PEM in early childhood education. Various studies are first cited to show that individuals other than trained teachers can stimulate the intellectual development of preschool children. The PEM model is thought to provide for the greatest integration of positively oriented activities at home and at school at the lowest cost possible. The model is also said to provide a training ground for the upgrading of adults as well as children. The PEM is explained to supervise paraprofessional teacher aides and paraprofessional home visitors who attempt to coordinate the classroom and home learning environments. The role of the PEM is shown to require him to retrain, plan, organize, supervise, and integrate the activities of eight paraprofessionals working with 48 children and their families. Implementation of the model and training of the PEM are then briefly noted. (CB)

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PARAPROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR MANAGER: A NEW PROFESSIONAL ROLE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Proposals of alternative methods for educating children that range from "computer assisted instruction" to "open classrooms" are beginning to appear in ever-increasing numbers. In most instances the new programs provide for a change in the mechanics of the delivery of instruction (textbooks, tape recorders) or a change in the teacher's technique (inquiry training, creativity). Experience with Head Start types of programs, however, has suggested that a change in the type of personnel implementing the program may prove to be another fruitful way of attaining changes in the learning of children.

As a result of interest in the effects on learning of individuals other than a trained teacher, Karnes and her associates conducted a series of studies comparing the gains that children made when taught by trained teachers with the gains they made when taught by others such as paraprofessional teachers (parateachers) and older siblings. One report (Karnes, Zehrbach, and Teska, 1971) cited several studies with the general findings that children did gain significantly when taught by individuals other than a trained teacher. In one study, children taught by parateachers, and by 16- and 17-year-old girls in a workstudy program, using a structured format, attained significant gains that did not differ from gains attained by children taught by professional teachers under similar conditions (comparable teacher-pupil ratio--1:5, race, sex, age, IQ, low economic level, structured format). In this study, children taught by professionals attained a mean Stanford-Binet IQ gain of 14.3 during a one-year period while children taught by adult parateachers made a mean S-B IQ gain of 12.5, and children taught by the 16- and 17-year-old girls gained 14.4 IQ points. When a multivariate analysis of covariance was used to analyze the data on the aforementioned Stanford-Binet plus the ITPA, Frostig, and Metropolitan Readiness Tests, the results yielded an "F" ratio of 1.29 which with df = 10 and 100 had a "p" of less than .25.

In a related set of studies, the effects of the teaching of older siblings (12 to 16 years of age) on younger children (CA = 3-4) was observed. Briefly, three studies were conducted during the summers of 1968, 1969, and 1970. During the summer of 1968, experienced teachers met with older children from economically deprived areas for one hour per day and taught them how to stimulate the thinking of their younger (CA = 4) siblings with a series of carefully selected games and activities. During the first summer, twelve young children manifested a mean IQ gain of 10.2 (p = .005).

The summer of 1969, a set of supervisory teachers met once a week to select carefully lessons, games, activities that were to be taught to young children. Each supervisory teacher then met with three to four older siblings or extended

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family members who practiced the activities they were to teach the younger children. During this summer the mean IQ gain of 1.1 for the fifteen children was not significant. The lack of gains in the program was attributed to a failure to involve the older children sufficiently.

In view of the discrepancy between the two studies, a third was conducted during the summer of 1970. The major alteration in the third project was an attempt to engage the teen-ager more completely in the study. Thus, although the supervising teachers still only met with the teen-agers once or twice a week, the teen-agers were involved in the planning, lesson plan selection, and lesson plan writing for their younger siblings. It was felt that their involvement in the process would stimulate them more. As a result of this six-week session, the eleven children in the project manifested a mean IQ gain of 6.7 ($p = .01$).

These findings suggest that given appropriate training, supervision, and involvement, teen-agers can contribute to the intellectual growth of younger siblings.

In a similar study, mothers were trained to stimulate the intellectual growth of their three- and four-year-old children. In this study, parents were paid $1.50 per hour (to defray taxi and babysitting fees) to attend twelve weekly sessions. At these sessions parents made free and inexpensive educational games, learned fingerplays, borrowed toys from a toy library. Mothers also discussed the progress the children were making and other problems of interest or concern to them. As a result, the subjects in this program attained mean IQ gains of 7.5 while control subjects made no gain. Similar results were also found on the ITPA.

In another study (Karnes, Teska, Hodgins, & Badger, 1970), twenty mothers of very young children met in groups of ten each for two-hour meetings held once a week for two years. During these meetings, the mothers discussed a wide variety of techniques for stimulating their child's cognitive and language development including the appropriate use of toys, language development, and discipline as well as related topics such as birth control and voting. After two years, the children manifested a mean IQ gain that was 16 points higher than a control group. Again, it would appear that individuals other than trained teachers can, with help, contribute significantly to the development of their child.

Development of Model

Since it is obvious from the previous findings that parents, older siblings, and paraprofessionals can be involved effectively in the intellectual stimulation of younger children if techniques other than those traditionally used by teachers are employed, one obvious question is, "How can one conceptualize these relationships to provide for greater growth?" Analysis of the experiences gained in implementing these programs suggests several guidelines. Any new model should provide for:

1. Increasing adult-child interaction.

2. Decreasing costs (both of monetary and professional time).

3. Increasing family involvement in helping the child.

4. Permitting adults to develop additional skills according to their own needs and abilities.

Application of these questions and other ideas lead to the development of the Paraprofessional Educator Manager (PEM) Model. The conceptualization of this model developed through an analysis of a series of models:

First, the "Traditional Model" can be exemplified by the functioning of two distinct professionally trained individuals, the teacher who works with 25 or 30 children in school and a social worker who works with her distinct caseload in the home. Further analysis of their functioning reveals that the teacher typically focuses her attention on educational activities, while the social worker attempts to resolve socio-economic—personal problems.

With the advent of some of the early childhood programs which focused on increased teacher-child interaction, a second model, the "Professional Model," became apparent. In this model, three professionally trained teachers are employed to teach 15-18 children. The model provides for a high degree of teacher-pupil interaction at a high expense. The social worker role remains essentially the same as in the Traditional Model.

To decrease expenses, a third model, the "Head Start Model" (see Figure 1), has been suggested. In this model, a head teacher, a teacher-aide, and a volunteer or additional teacher-aide provide for high teacher-pupil interaction in the classroom (1:5) while a parent coordinator attempts to involve parents outside the classroom. In the Head Start Model there is a fairly high cost--one professional teacher plus aides per 15 children and low parent involvement.

Expansion of this Head Start concept leads to the development of an "Intermediate Professional Model" in which one head teacher supervises six parateachers, each of whom is responsible for five to six children. Further, the head teacher tries to coordinate her efforts with a home visitor who supervises one or more paravisitors (depending upon the size of the center being served).

Again, the problem with the model is the lack of close communication between home and school which results in failure to involve the family in the productive development of their child.

The "Paraprofessional Educator Manager (PEM) Model" (see Figure 2) was conceived to provide for the greatest integration of positively oriented activities at home and at school at the lowest cost. This model can also provide a training ground for the upgrading of adults as well as children.

A detailed consideration of the model reveals that, initially, a PEM will supervise one to two sets of individuals. Each set includes two parateachers plus a third parateacher or volunteer plus a para-home visitor. All will be engaged in activities designed to help stimulate the child intellectually either directly--parateacher--or indirectly--para-home visitor helping the parents. The rounded configuration of the symbols for the children indicates this emphasis on the intellectual. In addition, personal-social help will be available as indicated by the angular attributes of the model. Note in the PEM Model most children receive both intellectual stimulation and social help from home visitors in contrast to earlier models where there is a division of effort. Where necessary, the home visitor will refer parents for help with those economic, social, or physical needs of parent and child that cannot be met in the school setting. One additional activity of the home visitor is to work with the parents of children who are too young to engage in classroom activities. The parents of these children will be helped to learn ways of stimulating their child during early infancy.

The role of the PEM, as indicated in the diagram, will require him to retrain, plan, organize, supervise, and integrate the activities of eight paraprofessionals who are working with 48 children and their families. The new role model indicates that future PEMs will need to develop a set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills different from those of a regular teacher. Of primary importance will be the ability of the PEM to work with adults--parents, grandparents, parateachers (both young and old), and para-home visitors--as well as children. He will have to mold all into a fully functioning unit that is successful not only within the school room setting but within the culture of the community and the schools it serves. Not only must the PEM interact socially with others, he must be able to organize and supervise the selection and implementation of curricula that meet the needs of the children.

Obviously such a position will require a well trained individual, probably at the master's degree level although it may be possible to select mature undergraduates and provide them with the needed experience during their junior and senior years. Even if a PEM is considered to be fully trained, the time and energy required to plan, organize, and inservice train the necessary individuals during the first year of a new program will limit the breadth of the program. Once the paraprofessionals are trained and some parents have been helped to organize themselves into productive groups, however, the PEM should be able to expand the program. In this instance, competent, experienced paraprofessionals should be able to assume more responsibility so that it may be possible for certain PEMs to supervise as many as four sets of well trained paraprofessionals. Note: One of the important aspects of the model is that the PEM has no permanently assigned teaching role and therefore is free to supervise and inservice train parateachers throughout the day. In this way the role of the PEM differs from that of a head teacher who must teach as well as try to supervise. The limits of the program will be based then on the interaction between the abilities of the PEM, quality of paraprofessionals, and needs of the population served.

Implementation of the Model

Since the concept of the PEM is basically a model that has had limited trial, a training program will need to be developed so that it can be more fully implemented in the future. The demands of the new role indicate that future PEMs should be carefully selected and trained to criteria that differ from those now applied in the selection of teachers or administrators. In addition, criteria for the selection and training of the paraprofessionals will need to be developed with a specific program in mind so that the needs of the subcultures to be served can be considered.

Although the discussion suggests that there are many advantages to be gained from implementing the model, there are several factors that should be taken into consideration when attempting to establish the approach. After the selection and training of the PEM, the selection and training of the paraprofessionals is of paramount importance. It should be obvious that since the task that is to be performed requires a considerable amount of interpersonal skill, the selection of the paraprofessionals should be based first and foremost on their interpersonal knowledge and skills. Second, since they will be required to learn many new ways of functioning, they should have both the ability to learn new ideas quickly and the flexibility of thought that permits them to adopt readily new attitudes.

The PEM will also have to change many of his attitudes, beliefs, and ways of functioning. He will have to learn how to use the assets of the paraprofessionals so that he may be assigned tasks that a paraprofessional is trained and ready to do. For example, in certain subcultural backgrounds, it is traditional for the female to be the head of the household. As such, she has learned to be responsible for the actions of the family, has developed some aggressiveness in seeing that things get done, and has learned certain skills for controlling children. On the other hand, many of these women lack the "hidden curriculum" type training that aids them in stimulating the intellectual development of their children. Inservice training on how to use games and activities to stimulate children will prepare them for fruitful endeavor in the classroom. With her basic assets plus inservice training, then, the parateacher can contribute greatly to the conduct of an educational program.

Another asset that is frequently found among certain subcultures is a sensitivity to the needs, goals, and values of others. Unfortunately, much of this sensitivity has been developed as a defense mechanism. Yet, when employed in a school setting toward the goal of helping children develop socially and intellectually, it can be seen that such a sensitivity can be extremely useful.

One of the problems that can accrue from the same type of background is that although the woman may bring many assets to the school, she also has likely learned many school inappropriate procedures for controlling children. Punitiveness, harshness, and failure to encourage appropriate actions are several learned responses that are inconsistent with most school programs today. Language patterns which provide modeling inappropriate to later schooling is another area of weakness. Strong inservice training programs for individuals with the ability to change, however, can result in the development of extremely positive classroom programs as illustrated by the research findings cited earlier.

With careful selection and inservice training, it can be seen how unusual, unique, and highly effective PEM teams can be developed.

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